

**SUMMARY OF THE
ON-SITE ASSESSMENT COMMITTEE MEETING
FEBRUARY 16, 2000**

The On-site Assessment Committee of the National Environmental Laboratory Accreditation Conference (NELAC) met by teleconference on Tuesday, January 16, 2000, at 12:30 p.m. Eastern Standard Time (EST). The meeting was led by its chair, Mr. William Ingersoll of the United States Navy. A list of action items resulting from this meeting is given in Attachment A. A cumulative list of outstanding action items identified and compiled by the committee is given in Attachment B. A list of participants is given in Attachment C. *The purposes of the meeting were to update committee members on NELAC approval authority for training and training providers and to review, prioritize, and designate responsibility for outstanding committee action items.*

INTRODUCTION

Mr. Ingersoll welcomed a new committee member, Mr. Richard Sheibley of the Pennsylvania Department of Environmental Protection, to the meeting. Mr. Ingersoll then led the committee in a status review of the compendium of outstanding action items (Attachment B).

- **Item No. 1 Committee teleconferences**

Teleconferences have been scheduled for March 1, March 22, April 12, April 26, May 10, May 24, June 7, and June 21, 2000. Mr. Ingersoll distributed the teleconference schedule to all committee members via a February 11, 2000, E-mail message.

- **Item No. 2 Preparation for Sixth NELAC Annual Meeting**

Mr. Ingersoll notified Ms. Lisa Doucet, Acting NELAC Executive Secretary, and Ms. Jeanne Hankins, NELAC Director, that the On-site Assessment Committee will need two NELAC VI sessions scheduled so as to not coincide with the sessions of the Proficiency Testing and Quality Systems committees.

- **Item No. 3 Report on NELAC authority to approve assessor training courses and training providers**

Ms. Hankins joined the teleconference to update the committee on NELAC approval authority issues. She noted that the U.S. States Environmental Protection Agency (USEPA) does not have the resources to approve NELAC training providers. She also noted that NELAC is a standard-setting body. Although the On-site Assessment Committee can establish criteria for approval, the committee cannot perform the approval function. Ms. Hankins noted the need for an approval process separate from USEPA and NELAC. She asked the committee to discuss the issue, come up with options, get feedback from the rest of the NELAC community, and make a proposal to the NELAC Board of Directors.

After considerable discussion of approval of training courses and training providers, the committee agreed that there are actually two separate issues in question: basic training and technical training. They identified three approval options:

- approve training materials and provide those materials to trainers,
- provide trainers with guidance to develop their own training materials, or
- provide Accrediting Authorities with criteria for approval and leave the responsibility for approval of training materials and training providers to the Accrediting Authorities.

Although there was some discussion of organizations that might approve the training materials, it was generally agreed that the committee was merely revisiting previous discussions in which such organizations were deemed to be cost-prohibitive.

The committee also identified one essential question regarding assessor training: Will NELAC assessor training require successful completion of a final examination administered as part of the training course or a demonstration of performance after training? It was noted that the Standard as currently written allows the on-site assessment as an opportunity to demonstrate performance after training. The committee entertained suggestions about how the Standard could provide better guidance in this area. It was suggested that essential elements of the Basic Training Course be included as an appendix to Standard Chapter Three and that trainer assessment criteria be included by reference in the chapter. A revision procedure for appendices outside the body of the Standard was suggested in which the “approved” version of any appendix would be the one currently posted on the NELAC Website. An *errata* sheet could be posted as needed to address any errors discovered in the document contrary to the Standard. The appendix could then be updated and revised on an annual basis with the Standard.

Ms. Hankins indicated that in the next NELAP Accrediting Authority teleconference (scheduled for Tuesday, February 22, 2000) she would raise the issue of whether the Accrediting Authorities 1) are *able* to approve training providers, 2) are *willing* to approve training providers if the On-site Assessment Committee provides approval criteria, and 3) are willing to assume responsibility for the administration of final examinations.

- **Item No. 4 Committee to consider approaching the NELAC Board of Directors (BoD) for approval to request assistance from USEPA’s Office of Research and Development (ORD) Performance Based Measurement Systems (PBMS) Workgroup in generating PBMS-consistent technical checklists**

Mr. Ingersoll informed the committee that he had spoken to the BoD regarding ORD PBMS workgroup assistance. It was explained that the agency PBMS workgroup had been established under the Environmental Monitoring Management Council (EMMC). EMMC has been reorganized and, although PBMS is not defunct, the workgroup is not an active workgroup. Also, the agency has not yet settled on a consensus approach to PBMS. In light of these facts, it was suggested that the On-site Assessment Committee coordinate its efforts with the Environmental Laboratory Advisory Board (ELAB) PBMS

workgroup. Mr. Ingersoll will contact the ELAB PBMS Workgroup's chair, Mr. Harry Gearhart.

- **Item No. 5 Assessor training course issues and discussion**

- **Basic training**

There was limited discussion of the status of the basic assessor training course and final exam since Dr. Margo Hunt of USEPA was not present at the meeting. The course materials have been delivered to the Global Institute of Environmental Scientists (GIES) for the pilot NELAC laboratory assessor training course to be presented late April/early May at sites on the East coast and West coast. Ms. Marlene Moore briefly reviewed the currently proposed logistics for course presentation by GIES. She solicited committee input on the registration materials she had distributed to committee members prior to the meeting and noted that the registration for the East coast location is nearing its 50-person capacity. Ms. Hankins informed the committee that ELAB has requested that she post the training materials. She asked for committee input regarding whether it would be better to post all of the materials or just the student portion. It was suggested that it would be easiest to post all the course materials, which have been broken down into an instructor's portion, a student's portion, and a Powerpoint® materials portion. Ms. Moore noted that questions concerning how changes can be incorporated into the course materials will arise after the GIES pilot course. It was suggested that the committee add consideration of how to update course materials to its action item list.

- **Technical training**

There was moderate discussion of the issue of technical training. It was noted that USEPA will not have the resources to do for technical training courses what they did for the basic assessor training course. In discussion of training courses previously outlined by the committee, it was suggested that, rather than focus on the number of days required for any technical course, the committee develop a curriculum and then obtain feedback from people familiar with the training process regarding how long the course should take. It was also noted that if the committee agrees with such a suggestion then the Standard must change because it currently includes a time schedule for technical training. It was also suggested that, rather than develop the curriculum for each technical course, the committee develop essential elements, essential skills, or essential outcomes for each one of the technical areas, perhaps with some overlap between areas. These essential outcomes could mirror the Fields of Testing, which may soon be called the Scope of Accreditation, in Chapter One of the Standards. Mr. Richard Sheibley volunteered to compile what he would consider essential outcomes for a microbiology course and distribute the essential outcomes list as a starting place for committee discussion. Ms. Susan Davis volunteered to distribute a copy of an International Laboratory Accreditation Cooperation (ILAC) guidance document

for assessor training courses. The issue was then tabled for discussion at a future meeting.

- **Item No. 6 Changes to the NELAC On-site Assessment Standard (Chapter Three)**

Mr. Ingersoll obtained an editable electronic copy of the On-site Assessment Standard and distributed it to committee members. After receiving this working copy of the Standard, committee members incorporated several proposed changes and distributed the document prior to the meeting. After noting the April 27, 2000, deadline for submission of proposed changes prior to NELAC VI, it was agreed that the committee would discuss their proposed changes, one section at a time, in a future teleconference. It was also agreed that the committee would keep track of the rationale behind each proposed change in order to explain the proposed change at NELAC VI.

- **Item No. 7 Quality Systems (QS) checklist updated after annual meeting**

Mr. Charles Dyer noted that he had received comments from the state of Kansas regarding errors in the QS checklist in conflict with the NELAC Standards. His changes in response to those comments, which had been distributed to committee members prior to the meeting, met with approval from the committee. This generated some discussion of how Mr. Dyer could go about changing the version currently posted on the NELAC Website. It was suggested that the committee consider adding language to the Standard regarding the process by which the checklist will be revised. The committee favored the revision procedure discussed for appendices to the Standard, in which the version currently posted on the NELAC Website is considered the “approved” version and errata sheets are posted as needed. Since the checklist cannot be immediately revised in response to every comment received, it will be updated, revised, or reworded on an annual basis with the NELAC Standards.

- **Item No. 8 Coordination with NELAC QS Committee on issues that bridge the two committees**

A process by which the On-site Assessment Committee may review QS Committee minutes has been developed. Mr. Ingersoll distributed the minutes of the QS Committee’s January 24, 2000, teleconference to members of the On-site Assessment Committee for their review.

- **Item No. 9 Coordination with AA on issues of reciprocity**

No action.

- **Item No. 10 Review of 12/1/99 Office of Water (OW)/Safe Drinking Water Act (SDWA) regulations for consistency with the NELAC On-site Assessment Standard (Chapter Three)**

No action.

- **Item No. 11 Increase communications with other committees**

No action.

- **Item No. 12 Responses to Field Measurements committee**

No action.

- **Item No. 13 Response to comments from Oklahoma**

Mr. Wayne Davis, although unable to attend the meeting, completed and distributed a letter detailing the committee's response to comments received from the state of Oklahoma. Mr. Ingersoll reported that Mr. Davis had asked for committee input regarding his completed response. Committee members were in agreement with Mr. Davis' comments.

- **Item No. 14 Response regarding radiological PBMS comments in regard to other programs**

No action.

- **Item No. 15 Response to comments from Utah**

No action.

- **Item No. 16 Response to comments from Virginia workgroup**

No action.

- **Item No. 17 Response to Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources (DNR) comments**

Two sets of comments have been received from two individuals within Wisconsin DNR. Ms. Davis asked any member of the committee who might have a copy of these comments to send them to her.

- **Item No. 18 Response to additional comments**

No action.

- **Item No. 19 NELAC VI voting agenda to include archiving the outdated Assessor Training Manual and removing reference to the manual from the Standard**

No action.

- **Item No. 20 Status of assessor checklist development**

No action.

- **Items 21-24 Administrative tasks and membership issues**

Items 21 through 24, consisting of administrative tasks pertaining to communications with the NELAC Director and Board of Directors, obtaining an editable version of the On-site Assessment Standard, and selection of a new committee member, were completed by Mr. Ingersoll.

CONCLUSION

The allotted time for the teleconference having expired, the meeting was adjourned at 2:30 p.m. EST. As the meeting was ending, Mr. Ingersoll noted that the next On-site Assessment Committee meeting is scheduled for March 1, 2000, at 12:30 p.m. EST.

**ACTION ITEMS
ON-SITE ASSESSMENT COMMITTEE MEETING
FEBRUARY 16, 2000**

Item No.	Action	Responsible Member	Date to be Completed
1.	Committee to brainstorm options for approval of assessor training courses and training providers in order to make a proposal to the NELAC Board of Directors.	All	
2.	NELAP Accrediting Authorities to determine whether they 1) are <i>able</i> to approve training providers, 2) are <i>willing</i> to approve training providers if the On-site Assessment Committee provides approval criteria, and 3) are willing to assume responsibility for the administration of final examinations.	J. Hankins to raise issue at next teleconference	2/22/00
3.	Committee to coordinate with the ELAB PBMS Workgroup in considering the development of PBMS-consistent technical assessor checklists.	W. Ingersoll to contact H. Gearhart, Workgroup Chair	3/1/00
4.	Compilation and distribution to all committee members of essential outcomes for microbiology course	R. Sheibley	2/29/00
5.	Distribution to all committee members of an ILAC guidance document for assessor training courses	S. Davis	2/29/00
6.	Committee to brainstorm procedure for updating training course materials as needed.	All	
7.	Committee to determine procedure for making edits or corrections to the version of any document currently posted on the NELAC Website.	C. Dyer	

**COMPENDIUM OF OUTSTANDING ACTION ITEMS
ON-SITE ASSESSMENT COMMITTEE
AS OF FEBRUARY 16, 2000**

Item No.	Action	Responsible Member	Date to be Completed
1.	Teleconferences have been scheduled for March 1, March 22, April 12, April 26, May 10, May 24, June 7, and June 21, 2000.		Complete
	NELAC VI meeting 6/26-29/00 - Williamsburg, VA.	W. Ingersoll to contact L. Doucet, USEPA	Complete
2.	NELAC Annual meeting preparation:		
	Provide an estimate of the total time needed for your Committee's NELAC 6 session(s) to Exec Sec.		2/14/00
	Submit final changes to the Standards for posting on the NELAC web page prior to the annual meeting.		4/27/00
	Submit final Committee agendas for the annual meeting.		5/12/00
	Replacement of committee members whose terms are expiring - All candidates must be identified and voted upon by NELAC Committees.		5/12/00
3.	Mr. Ingersoll will meet with the NELAC Board of Directors to clarify NELAC's approval authority regarding assessor training courses and training providers.	W. Ingersoll to invite J. Hankins to report on issue	Complete
3A.	Committee to discuss and compile training approval options, get feedback from NELAC stakeholders, and draft proposal to the NELAC Board of Directors.		
3B.	Committee to consider Accrediting Authority responsibility for training approval.	J. Hankins to raise issue at next AA tele-conference	2/22/00
4.	Committee to coordinate with ELAB PBMS Workgroup in:	W. Ingersoll to contact H. Gearhart	3/01/00
	1) consideration of generating checklists covering all QC items included in USEPA mandated test methods for drinking water and waste water analysis, and		
	2) compiling a list of those methods thought to be procedurally defined.		

Item No.	Action	Responsible Member	Date to be Completed
5.	<p>Training Course Issues and discussion:</p> <p>1) Basic training course development -</p> <p>a) Basic assessor training course will include the QS Checklist prepared by Mr. Dyer, including Appendices C and D.</p> <p>b) Dr. Hunt will consolidate basic assessor training course test bank questions and answers and distribute to committee members so that committee can verify that answers are correct.</p> <p>2) Final Course Exam - handling and administration</p> <p>3) Procedure for updating course materials as needed</p> <p>4) Technical training course development -</p> <p>Committee to review previously outlined approach to technical course development, as follows, and identify actions to be taken for each item:</p> <p>a) The technical course approach will be evenly split between data audit and systems audit. (Is development of technical checklists to continue?)</p> <p>b) The final exam will cover both data audit and systems audit and will include at least one data packet. (Final exam or demonstration of performance?)</p> <p>c) Data packets will be tailored to the course discipline.</p> <p>d) Technical courses will be developed in at least the areas of microbiology, asbestos analysis, radiochemistry, wet chemistry, organic chemistry, and inorganic chemistry. (Is development of technical courses to continue?)</p> <p>e) The On-site Assessment Committee proposes that the microbiology course be developed fairly quickly.</p> <p>Committee to consider new approach to technical training course development and identify actions to be taken for each item:</p> <p>a) develop essential elements/outcomes list?</p> <p>b) provide guidance, perhaps in the form of a guidance document or appendix?</p>	<p>M. Hunt</p> <p>M. Hunt</p> <p>R. Sheibley S. Davis</p>	<p>Complete</p> <p>1/26/00</p>

Item No.	Action	Responsible Member	Date to be Completed
6.	Committee to review, update, and recommend wording for changes to the On-site Assessment Standard in light of the following issues:		
6A.	Issues discussed at the Fifth Interim NELAC Meeting: 1) Clarification of whether AARB monitors EPA or NELAP 2) Clarification of CBI issues, including whether third party assessors may sign CBI papers on behalf of the Accrediting Authority and whether non-government employees are held to the same accountability standards as government employees 3) Issue of reciprocity arising from question of whether an assessor must review all laboratory SOPs or a statistical sample of the SOPs 4) Issue of “adequacy” of SOPs, including committee’s suggested three-item clarification language (see minutes) 5) Issue of expanding the Basic NELAC Assessor Training Course, including soliciting input from NELAC stakeholders as to level of detail needed in the course 6) Review of NELAC On-site Assessment and Quality Systems Standards to be sure that they are consistent		
6B.	Consistency with other chapters and with training course: 1) Assessor ethics requirement in training course, but not standard 2) Removal of Assessor Training Manual reference(s) in Chapter 3	W. Davis W. Davis	1/26/00
6C.	Consistency of completing the assessment checklist, i.e. record of evidence observed or just deficiencies observed: Recommend wording for standard changes relating to guidance for providing recommendations and subjective comments. (See S. Davis, City of Austin, e-mail, 12/20/99?)	S. Davis	2/16/00
6D.	Definition of evaluation criteria for onsite assessment: These include barriers for not approving a lab based on multiple findings, unwillingness to take corrective action within specified time frame or repetitive findings between audit or statistical certainty based on number of observations for declaring a deficiency.	J. Hall	2/16/00
6E.	Comments received from NELAC stakeholders		
7.	Quality Systems Checklist to be updated for consistency with Standard after annual meeting.	C. Dyer	8/01/00
7A.	Committee to determine procedure for making edits or corrections, as needed, to the version of any document currently posted on the NELAC Website.	C. Dyer	
8.	Committee to explore receiving minutes from QS committee prior to web posting.	W. Ingersoll	Complete
8A.	Committee to review QS minutes for impact on Chapter 3 and training course contents.	J. Hall	On-going

Item No.	Action	Responsible Member	Date to be Completed
9.	Committee will review minutes from Accrediting Authorities meetings for impact on Chapter 3 and training course contents.	C. Dyer	On-going
10.	Review of EPA Office of Water regulations issued 12/1/99 for SDWA for consistency with Chapter 3 standard. Identify inconsistencies for review.	S. Davis	4/1/00
11.	Review opportunities for communication of On-site Assessment Committee activities to other committees and Board of Directors.	W. Davis	2/16/00
12.	Prepare response to comments received from the NELAC Field Measurements Committee.	M. Moore	
13.	Finalize letter communicating the On-site Assessment Committee's response to comments received from the state of Oklahoma.	W. Davis	Complete
14.	Radiological PBMS comments, DW versus other programs.	W.Ingersoll	
15.	Utah comments	C. Dyer will resend e-mail containing these comments	
16.	Virginia Work Group comments	W. Davis	
17.	Wisconsin DNR comments (two sets of comments, each from a different individual)	S. Davis/ M. Moore	
18.	Additional comments on Chapter 3 (See e-mail Marlene Moore resent 1/10/00)	M. Moore	
19.	The On-site Assessment Committee will place on their voting agenda for the Sixth NELAC Annual Meeting the archiving of the Assessor Training Manual currently posted on the NELAC web page and the adjustment of the NELAC Standard to remove references to the manual.		5/12/00
20.	Mr. Davis will summarize and tabulate status of assessor checklist development.	W. Davis	
21.	Mr. Ingersoll will request an editable copy of the chapter from the NELAC Director.	W. Ingersoll	Complete
22.	In his 2/10 meeting with the Board, Mr. Ingersoll will ask for assistance in improving the On-site Assessment Committee's communications with other NELAC committees	W. Ingersoll	Complete
23.	Each member will Email their vote for the new committee member to Mr. Ingersoll.	All	Complete
24.	Mr. Ingersoll will submit the results of the vote to the NELAC chair.	W. Ingersoll	Complete

PARTICIPANTS
ON-SITE ASSESSMENT COMMITTEE MEETING
JANUARY 26, 2000

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